



# HARTFORD STREET ZEN CENTER

57 Hartford Street San Francisco, California 94114 Telephone: (415) 863-2507

Newsletter

April, May, June 1990

## Tokudo/Priest Ordination

*On Saturday February 24, 1990, Issan ordained as priests Shoyo Jo-E Angelique Farrow, Shogaku Joshi Paul Higley and Daiko Tanzen David Bullock with a traditional Tokudo ceremony held in the zendo.*

*On March 4, a week after the priest ordination, Baker-roshi visited and gave the Sunday lecture. The following is excerpted from his lecture.*

"Being ordained, being actually able to take the vows, is considered to be the same as enlightenment ...Does that make you nervous? What a shock. Because if you can actually take the vows, and keep taking them, it's not only a prediction, but it's enlightenment itself. Although you take Buddhist vows, each one of you takes your own particular vows. Though your life experience that brought you to take these vows might look the same and sound the same, for each of you there is a different history of your coming to it. There's a term in critical studies—to "unpack" something, like unpacking a suitcase. And I think it's actually a quite useful term. When you practice, you unpack your vows. You keep unpacking and what you find out, if your experience is like mine and like other people I know who have taken vows and keep taking them, is that ten years later you find out you unpacked why you took the vows, or what you meant when you took them."

"There's a quality of listening embedded in our vows. You look at the world and you see your suffering, our suffering, and you somehow find a way to listen to it...In Buddhism, everything has a quite practical basis. To listen isn't some philosophical idea. It starts with your listening...To be able to listen outside what you want to hear begins to cause anxiety, but if you are able to listen outside of whether you want to hear it or not, there's a lot less anxiety...zen at the level of counting your breath is to hear 'hearing' and when you get so that you have the habit of not just hearing



something, but hearing itself, then you're hearing big mind—you're hearing presence or awareness."

"...You choose a spiritual life. Yamada Mumon-roshi once said you can't cover the earth with leather, but you can walk with shoes. Though you can't make it all spiritual, you can walk your own spiritual life—your own personal way of finding your vows, finding how you most want to live, and how you want to live in the world, what you want to give to the world, and what you can allow the world to give you. So practice is pretty simple in this sense, that it's something you settle down into—what Suzuki-roshi called 'your innermost request'—you're just trying to locate and be in touch with your innermost request. And that requires some listening. And 'being in touch with'—is not so easy. And one of the reasons we have this breathing practice is you start the practice of listening with your actual hearing, you start the practice of 'being in touch with' by being able to stay in touch with your breath. First you count your breath, and then you follow your breath, but eventually you begin to feel a kind of awareness—mind, big-mind contact with your breath. And when you can begin to feel presence on your breath, and stay with that feeling of presence on your breath, and it doesn't leave you during the day, or less and less leaves you all the time, then you can begin to be in touch with your inner-most request. There's a connection between being able to stay with this feeling of presence in breathing, and being able to listen to or stay with your vows or your inner-most request."

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## Snippy Snappy Day (on D, A & P Ordination)

Snip snap go the scissors  
No place to hide no more  
Are we sorry for you yoo hoo  
Ha ha big ears ho ho  
Everyone sees my faults  
Oh I loved my lovely hair like  
I love my lovely lovely life  
And now it's gone away  
Alas alack the day  
Will I wear a hat  
To go on out  
To keep away a chill?  
Life's so very short  
And so's my hair  
What's a gal or fellow to do?  
I'll wear my hat  
And that's that

—Bruce Boone



## Ram Dass

*On February 6, 1990, hospice advocate Ram Dass spoke at HSZC. He is author of the book, "How Can I Help?", and has done much to encourage and inform caregivers—both grassroots and medical/social service providers, urging them to re-examine what it means to help or to be of service.*

Ram Dass began by saying, "I come here this evening because this place, Issan and the flock, are a heartfelt bunch, and in my learning in how emptiness and compassion go together, I'm always yearning to find beings who are exploring both simultaneously."

He continued, "Kalu Rinpoche recently died. He said to me, 'Ram Dass, you have only three things to do in this lifetime. Honor your guru, deepen your emptiness, and deepen your compassion.' That seems like sufficient instruction for this lifetime. To hear that statement, that out of emptiness arises compassion, is to hear a place from which acts arise which is so immense in its emptiness that the least thin thread of somebodyness makes the compassion conditional, and what my guru represents to me is that quality of pure compassion which is free from any desire. So where is the desire that suffering end? It's empty. Then why do you act to end suffering? Because when you're empty, that's what you do. Empty of separateness that makes suffering anything but suffering. It's not her suffering or his suffering. It's not even our suffering. Just suffering. There is a place so deep and empty from which action comes. To be in the presence of that kind of action—it's graceful. It feeds the truth...Our dualistic tradition preserves the drama. There is no drama ultimately in compassionate action. It's just the way it is. That's the only kind of compassionate action or service that doesn't burn out. It doesn't burn out the same way the sun doesn't burn out. Because it's the root of what it is—what form and emptiness are—Dance. To me, the opportunity to be in the presence of suffering, my own and other's, is like being given a gift of standing at the edge of truth. It's a situation that pulls from you the purest quality of heart."

*We are grateful to Ram Dass for taking time out of his busy schedule to spend an evening sharing his understanding with us.*



## Poetry Benefit For Maitri

The Maitri Hospice Poetry Benefit at the University of San Francisco March 4 was a great success. Some 600 people crammed into a large room at McClaren Hall to hear Philip Whalen, Diane DiPrima, Nathaniel Mackey, Judy Grahn and Allen Ginsberg. Beat Luminaries such as Michael McClure and Lawrence Ferlinghetti sat in the audience.

Philip Whalen kicked off the evening reading poems that mixed erudition, nature observations, zen teaching and his own inimitable wit. Diane DiPrima followed reading a dialogue between the Virgin Mary and St. Elizabeth and excerpts from "Loba". Diane concluded with a new Revolutionary Letter which maintained that "The only war is the war against the imagination."

African American poet Nathaniel Mackey, who edits "Hambone" magazine, next read a Duncanesque suite of poems. Jazz musician Don Cherry showed up and began accompanying the end of Mackey's set on flute. Feminist poet Judy Grahn, who along with Ginsberg keynoted the national gay/lesbian writing conference that weekend, began by reading a poem on the ego-shattering power of love. Grahn accompanied herself on a synthesizer and used tapes (a la Laurie Anderson) for two final healing poems for rape and incest survivors.

Allen Ginsberg rounded off the evening accompanied by Don Cherry. Allen read an amusing work linking General Noriega and George Bush and another celebrating his sphincter. He concluded with a mantra poem to exorcise Jesse Helms and cigarette addiction. All in all, the evening moved over the full range of human experience. The healing spirit the poets engendered well reflected the warm, healing spirit of Maitri itself.

As MC and event organizer, it was a special joy to me to be able to present five poets whose work has so enriched my life over the years as well as to introduce my teacher, Issan Dorsey. The event couldn't have happened without the help of Father Alberto Huerta of USF, Tensho David Schneider who designed the beautiful poster, Ken Ireland who got the posters printed, Wilton Woods who was in charge of publicity and poster distribution, and David Sunseri who was in charge of the stage and set-up. Thanks also to everyone else who played a role in making this benefit a success. Video and audio tapes of the reading will be available for viewing at Hartford Street Zen Center.

—Steve Abbott

## J.D. Kobezak

Although J.D. died over the New Year's weekend, his memory continues to live in my heart. He was our first resident at Maitri Hospice and was living at 57 Hartford Street before the present building was acquired. His presence gave the volunteers and other caregivers a chance to learn many things for which we remain grateful.

Working on a video documentary about Maitri Hospice, as I have been for many months now, I see J.D.'s image over and over again in the editing room: his smile, his laughter and his wisdom.

J.D. was so ill about two years ago, over a period of months, that we all thought he was dying and said our goodbyes to him. He gradually recovered, and last Fall was well enough to return to Florida to be with his family. The following is an excerpt from the video and one of the many ways I shall remember him. J.D. said, "I've had many people say to me, 'Can you please teach me something about what it is like to die?' and I didn't know what to say. I asked Issan and Issan said, 'Tell them that if they didn't get it the first time, they've missed it.' And Sharon asked me this time after I did get so much better...she said, 'How is it you recovered so very much when you were almost dead?' And I said, 'I don't know what the hell happened.' And it was just this: it was an experience, and we're living day to day with AIDS and doing the best that we could do with what we had. And there was no hocus-pocus about it. It was just doing simple basic stuff, like bringing a glass of water...or a martini."

—Sharon Kehoe

*Not long after J.D. died, we held a traditional Buddhist funeral for him in the zendo, at which Issan presided. It was followed by a big party in his honor. We danced and drank martinis—just the way J.D. would have liked.*



## South Africa

*Kijun Steve Allen has returned from six weeks in South Africa, where he was leading meditation retreats and practicing with a small group who are working to establish a Zen Buddhist practice center in Johannesburg. On a Sunday morning not long after his arrival back at HSZC he spoke about his trip.*

"It's interesting to go to a new place to think that you are going to talk about the same things and find that you're actually talking about something different. Our practice is so much embedded in our direct experience and the practical choices we make, that to talk about Buddhist practice in South Africa is to actually talk about a different practice than our's here in San Francisco. And yet, of course they are obviously connected, like a family, with shared values and to some extent, with shared experience.

While I was there, I chose not to talk about Buddhism as Buddhism, but Buddhism as "The practice of the awakened mind". Sometimes by saying things in a slightly different way we can bring out a different quality of our experience. One way we can begin to recognize the vastness of our everyday experience is by simply shifting the language slightly, in this way we begin to see it in a different light and even process it in a different way. While in South Africa I began to understand the value of that early Chinese Buddhist practice of going on pilgrimage to different places, to see different teachers, and to experience different parts of our larger body, because new information is conveyed somehow in that process—a new perspective or maturing develops.

Because Buddhist practice is new in South Africa, the students there are quite open to whoever shows up at the airport. So I felt a deep responsibility, and I felt an obligation to be true not only to our common practice and lineage, but to my own direct experience and understanding—anything else would be a sham, and certainly there's enough sham in South Africa not to add to it. I felt on the line with myself and my practice, and with a real sense of what is this all really about? If I'm talking about chanting practice, or bowing practice, or I'm talking about meditation. What does this actually mean in this situation, with this group in this environment? Preconceptions and technical jargon were not the answer.

Because South Africa is in such a state of tension, and has been for some time for many people, there's an enquiring mind that's right there on the surface, there's an immediacy about what to do, and a truly not knowing what to do. The situation is powerful and so potentially explosive that it's driven many

people back into their own direct experience and their capacity to deal with the shifts and the changes in their immediate environment themselves. Many of them can see that there's no answer out there. There's no system, or organization that's going to come in and make it alright. They are on their own. In this kind of environment our practice can be a real help; an immediate aid to support equanimity and clear insight, for when we can set aside, for even a moment, the world we thought we lived in, or the world we imagined we lived in, and actually sit down with each other in peace, we have a chance to touch the present moment—which has no idea of who we are, and has no investment in our ideas, or our fantasies.

Many of our Buddhist practices are centered in this direct experience of the present moment, and the teaching and the sangha renew our capacity and our ability to be present with things as they are. This simple practice of sitting meditation, doing zazen together, is a door that allows us to reenter this original territory. The question is how do we actually restructure our lives so that we can encounter the present moment? The practice of zazen has been developed to help us negotiate that way. The way of approach has to do with this relationship with body and mind and breath—body, speech and mind. The integration of body, speech and mind in stillness, allows us to sense what to do. The experience of body, speech and mind sitting together in stillness lies outside (maybe it's inside) our normal perception of time. In this way our normal understanding of inside and outside has a chance to dissolve. When we can be in a place that is neither inside nor outside, we can negotiate our path in a new way. The teaching is always pointing to this place that is neither inside nor outside. I think it's the basic koan of zen practice: Where is this place that's neither inside nor outside? Thich Nhat Hahn, held up his hand once and said, "Look at your hand, is it inside or outside?" To explore our experience at this fundamental level nourishes us, and nourishes our practice. San Sunim says, "Don't know mind." It's not the "Don't know..." of not examining. It's not the "Don't know..." of being in a state of ignorance. It's the not knowing of "Is it inside or outside?" It's the not knowing of this present moment, that's ungraspable.

We live in a time of great change: social, political, economic and intellectual change. Who can we go to to learn how to negotiate this change? The great master of change is surprisingly enough our own body and mind. Just think of its journey, from undifferentiated cell in our mother's womb, through childhood, to us, and on to death—enormous



change, continuous uninterrupted change. And this body of change is always, always encountering the present moment. In this very simple and direct way, we just come back to our body and mind—back to our own breath. And when we stop to listen, what a powerful and unending teaching is being revealed.

## Lecture by Tensho David Schneider

*Tensho David Schneider is the editor of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship Newsletter and is currently working on a biography of Issan Dorsey. He is also very active in the Vajradhattu community. Tensho speaks one Sunday morning each month at HSZC. The following lecture was given on February 25, the day after the Tokudo ceremony.*

Good morning. I'm really happy to be here this morning, really glad to be here. Yesterday was a very joyous day here. Most of you probably know that there was an ordination ceremony, which is a big event in all the realms, all over the cosmic universe, and it started right here. It makes me really happy to think about that and to be here. And in the Tibetan tradition it is the last day before the end of the year. In that tradition a lot of practices have been done during the last ten days or so, and tomorrow's a big celebration day. So it feels like the day before New Year's Eve, and I have a good celebratory feeling. And that's what I want to talk about.

We ought to know what we're doing with our life. We ought to know what we're doing. When I come in and offer incense here, I don't know how many of you have ever thought "What's he doing there? What's going on? And why are all those things up there?" I've been thinking about offerings a lot, because I've been having to do a lot of them. So, we here have this altar, and we have several statues on it, and these pictures; and we offer things—incense, flowers, light, and sometimes water, and various other representations. These are sense offerings. They're offerings of the sense realms—beautiful offerings to the Buddhas, Manjushri, Trungpa Rinpoche—something for the eyes, something for the ears when we hit the bell, something for the nose. Sometimes there are books wrapped in beautiful cloth—which is touch, and the books represent mind. So, we make these offerings. The zen tradition especially, and also in other traditions, but zen emphasizes: Buddha is not just "up there". The Buddha is not outside you. The Bodhisattvas are not outside

you. When you make offerings, which we all do from time to time at funerals or memorial ceremonies, or other kinds of ceremonies, what are you doing? How can you make an offering to something that looks like it's outside you, but is not outside you?

We have sense experience constantly. We have information coming through our sense gates unceasingly, but mostly we ignore that information. We ignore our sensory experience. Often we're caught in a pattern of thinking. We're running around a series of ideas that have intrigued us for one reason or another—either we like them or we don't like them, or we're fascinated by them or horrified by them, and we miss a great deal of our life that way. We miss the quality of the present moment. We neglect to make sense offerings to the Buddhas that are in our heart. In Buddhism the mind is considered a sense gate, and ideas are what flow in and out of that sense gate. And ideas can be offered as well. But all too often we crash through our day trying to accomplish something—something virtuous no doubt, but something we want to get done—something important. We're like one of those big, huge icebreaker ships. We get our momentum going and we crunch through the sense realms, the world. We just crash through. And we neglect to offer ourselves beautiful things—the beautiful blossoming tree outside, or the fog horns in the early morning. Did you hear them over here this morning? They were very clear in Albany this morning. When I say that we neglect to offer ourselves something beautiful, I don't mean that we should all run out and indulge ourselves in some orgy of sense pleasure that we have to work up, or fabricate. There's nothing wrong with that per se. The point is that we have that opportunity continuously. We have it all the time. How you make your tea or your coffee in the morning, you can see it as just something you've got to get done, and get drunk, in order to get on to your next gig; or, you could appreciate this as a sense offering—the sound of the water, the fragrance of the tea or the coffee, the taste of it, how you feel, the quality of the water on your face as you wash. It can be a hassle to get cleaned up and rush outside, or it can be a celebration. And it's not just to yourself that you make this offering, when you take care of yourself this way, you celebrate your life for everyone. And what happens is, that quality of celebration, that relationship with the phenomenal world is infectious. People like that. People are attracted to that.

In my training in zen, I often fell prey, as did a lot of my sangha, to a funny idea about Bodhisattvas. As a Bodhisattva, you take care of everybody else, that's your job. And there tended to be a little bit of neglect



to your own circumstances, to your own situation. There was a little bit of an impoverished feeling about the way that we took care of ourselves. We would do something really nice for somebody else. We would clean the shrine room, or clean the Buddha Hall, or clean the zendo—get really pretty flowers for the “other” place. It’s said that a Bodhisattva won’t enter nirvana until all sentient beings can go in. Issan used to joke about that. He’d say that wasn’t his approach, he was going to get into nirvana and drag them in from the inside. And I think that’s actually right. You can’t save anybody when you’re a mess. The quality that encourages people is an overflowing quality, a quality of warmth, which comes out of having taken care of yourself, and made the proper offerings, having enjoyed your life. That feeling flows over. It’s warmth. It’s genuine. You don’t have to fake it. You don’t have to save anybody. You actually like seeing other people—“Oh look, oh yeah, there’s another thing, look how good that looks.” That’s saving all sentient beings—right there, that overflowing warmth.

We each know for ourselves when we’re being indulgent and selfish, when we’re shutting out others. I’m not talking about taking care of yourself to the extent that you shut out others. “Don’t bug me man. I’ve got to appreciate my little space here. Go away!” That’s not what I mean. Your path always has just the right set-up in it for you to appreciate, for you to work with it, to make it an offering—to take pleasure in your life. And I don’t mean just that it’s always pleasant. Sometimes you get really pissed off or really hurt, and you can take pleasure in that. It’s kind of nice, every now and then. “Oh, I didn’t know I could feel that way.” So, in our practice, our basic practice, we start by simplifying. We take pleasure in our posture, in our body, and mind, and breath. We celebrate that. And then we act out various rituals through the day. The ritual of offering beautiful things to the Buddha is like a play, like an early mystery play in the church. So, we start with just the simplest things—our own bodies, our own mind, and the breath that flows between body and mind that penetrates them. From there we overflow. It’s hard to do it if you’re rushing. It’s hard to do if you’re going too fast or if you’re in the circumstance of trying to accomplish too much. It’s very hard to appreciate your life. We have to accomplish things, but aggression grows behind the need to accomplish things. You get aggressive. It just comes with it. And when you go too fast, you can’t possibly keep up with the phenomenal world. So there are little warnings. When you find yourself really trying to accomplish something good, or hurrying to get

something done, it’s always a little cue that you can stop and slow down and bring the accomplishment present. Absolutely present. Usually we’re trying to accomplish something that we think will be beneficial for ourselves or others, or Buddhism, or some good thing. So we try to accomplish “some good thing” and we neglect the Buddha. We neglect to make the offerings. Buddha is “out there,” then. And actually we just perpetuate that view of Buddha, that view of truth as being “out there.” We have to accomplish it because it’s “out there.” Whereas, when you come back and celebrate, then you are accomplishing immediately. It’s done. And then the next moment, it’s also done. You might not get as much “stuff” done, but you might also not pollute the world as much either. That’s what I meant when I said we ought to know what we’re doing.

So happy new year. It’s going to be the year of the iron horse. We’ve just come through the year of the water snake—bad year according to the Tibetans, tough year we’ve just gotten through. So this next year is supposed to be a lot easier, a lot better. I’m certainly looking forward to that. We can have a big long celebration. We can have a whole year celebration, starting right now. So let’s party. Thank you very much.

## **Second Annual Maitri Hospice Benefit Auction and Dinner/Dance**

An auction and dinner/dance benefitting Maitri, a Home and Hospice for People with AIDS, will be held Saturday, May 12, at Fort Mason in the Conference Center, Building A at 7 pm. This event is part of a campaign to raise funds for vitally needed building renovations, food and operating expenses for the Maitri Hospice.

Dinners at some of the Bay Area’s finest restaurants and accommodations at quaint country bed and breakfast inns will be among hundreds of surprises, art objects and vacations to be auctioned. A buffet dinner, drinks and dancing until midnight in a beautiful room overlooking the Bay and Golden Gate Bridge. No host bar. \$10.00 admission. We hope as many Sangha members as possible will be there to give their support to Maitri and to enjoy a fun filled evening together.

For this auction to be a success, your generous contribution of services, items to be auctioned, or whatever support you can give is important. If you can help on the night of the event, or help in any way at all, please call 861-6779.

Hope to see you the night of May 12!

## Special Events Calendar

Tuesday	April 3	Kijun Steve Allen will speak on "Buddhism, South Africa and Social Change", 8:00 pm. Donation requested.
Friday	April 6	Buddha's Birthday. Two day sitting begins 8:00 pm to 9:45 pm. Please register in advance: \$40 non-members, \$30 members.
Saturday	April 7	Sitting continues, 5:00 am to 9:45 pm.
Sunday	April 8	Sitting continues, 5:00 am to 5:00 pm.
Monday	April 9	Full Moon Bodhisattva ceremony, 6:40 pm.
Tuesday	April 17	Tibetan Medicine Buddha ceremony performed by Lama Santen, 8:00 pm. Donation requested.
Tuesday	May 1	Sharon Kehoe will show her video documentary, "AIDS/Zen The Story of Maitri Hospice", 8:00 pm. Donation requested.
Sunday	May 6	One Day Sitting, 5:00 am to 5:00 pm.
Wednesday	May 9	Full Moon Bodhisattva ceremony, 6:40 pm.
Saturday	May 12	MAITRI BENEFIT AUCTION AND DINNER/DANCE, 7:00 pm at the Conference Center, Building A, Fort Mason. \$10 admission.
Sunday	June 3	One Day Sitting, 5:00 am to 5:00 pm.
Tuesday	June 5	Celeste West, SFZC Librarian, Poet and Author of "A Lesbian Love Advisor", will speak. 8:00 pm. Donation requested.
Friday	June 8	Full Moon Bodhisattva ceremony, 6:40 pm.

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## Weekly Schedule

**Sunday:** Informal period of zazen at 9:20 am, lecture 10:00 am, followed by tea and discussion. Donation requested.

**Monday:** Zazen instruction for newcomers, 5:30 pm. If you cannot attend at this time please call and make an appointment with Joshi Paul Higley.

Buddhist Chant Study Class, led by Zenshin Philip Whalen. Call HSZC for details.

**Wednesday:** Shanti Support Group, 7:00 pm.

**Thursday:** Shanti Support Group, 7:00 pm.



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## HARTFORD STREET ZEN CENTER

### Daily Schedule

#### *Monday through Friday*

Zazen	6:00 am
Interval	6:25 am
Zazen	6:30 am
Service & Soji	6:55 am
Zazen	6:00 pm
Service	6:40 pm

### Zendo Protocol

Please arrive five minutes early and get well settled before the period begins. Be as quiet as possible and walk very softly, bowing as you enter the sitting area and when crossing in front of the altar.

When you reach your seat bow towards it with hands together in gassho, then turn clockwise and bow facing outward before sitting down. When the bell rings at the end of the period bow with your hands in gassho, fluff your zafu cushion, bow towards your seat and then away from it. If you are not staying for service leave as quietly as possible, bowing as you pass the altar. After the service, stand at your place until the Doan (time keeper) bows, then follow the person furthest from the door out of the zendo.

It is suggested that you wear dark loose fitting clothing—pants or a long skirt, but not shorts—and that you do not wear socks when sitting. Once you are seated and the bell has rung, please make your best effort not to move or make noise.

#### **Dokusan** (practice interviews)

Students are encouraged to attend dokusan on a regular basis. Both Zenshin Philip Whalen and Abbot Issan Dorsey are available to discuss your practice and answer students' questions. Please make appointments in advance.

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